NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
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PEKING CONGRESS PROFILE

ANNCR:

CHINA'S NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS, NOW MEETING IN PEKING, IS THAT NATION'S VERSION OF A PARLIAMENT OR NATIONAL LEGISLATURE. BUT IT DIFFERS IN MOST RESPECTS FROM THOSE BODIES AS THEY ARE KNOWN IN THE NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES. VOA'S JIM MILLER HAS THIS PROFILE OF THE CONGRESS FROM HONG KONG.

VOICE:

THE CHINESE NATIONAL PEOPLE'S CONGRESS IS OFFICIALLY DESCRIBED AS THE HIGHEST ORGAN OF STATE POWER IN THE PEOPLES REPUBLIC. IN REALITY, IT IS CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN THAT. A SINGULAR DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE CHINESE CONGRESS AND THOSE, FOR INSTANCE, IN MOST WESTERN DEMOCRACIES, IS THAT IT IS PRESENTED WITH DECISIONS ALREADY MADE BY THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP AND OBEDIENTLY ADDS ITS MARK OF APPROVAL TO THOSE DECISIONS. AS FAR AS IS KNOWN, THERE IS NO DEBATE ON THE FLOOR OF THE PEOPLES CONGRESS OF CRITICAL OR PRESSING NATIONAL ISSUES AND NO LOUD VOICES OF DISSENT.

ONE FUNCTION THAT THE PEKING CONGRESS SERVES, HOWEVER, IS AS A MEDIUM FOR INFORMING BOTH THE CHINESE PEOPLE AND THE REST OF THE WORLD OF ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE LEADERSHIP. THIS INFORMATION SURFACES AS THE DECISIONS ARE PUBLICLY PRESENTED TO THE CONGRESS FOR ITS APPROVAL.

SINCE THE DOWNFALL OF THE GANG OF FOUR RADICALS, THERE HAS WITHOUT DOUBT BEEN SOME RELAXATION IN THE RIGID AND DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH OF THE EXTREMISTS. VICE PREMIER TENG HSIAO-PING HAS ORDERED THE OFFICIALS AT ALL LEVELS TO GET CLOSER TO THE PEOPLE,

LISTEN TO THEIR COMPLAINTS, AND NOT STIFLE PUBLIC OPINION. THE CHINESE MEDIA HAVE BECOME LESS INFLEXIBLE, AND EDUCATION, THE ARTS, LITERATURE, SCIENCE AND OTHER AREAS HAVE BEEN LIBERALIZED.

EVEN SO, CHINA REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST CLOSED SOCIETIES IN THE WORLD. THIS IS REFLECTED IN THE FACT THAT PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT POLITICAL MEETING TO TAKE PLACE IN CHINA DURING THIS PERIOD IS NOT THAT OF THE NATIONAL PEOPLES CONGRESS, NOR THE PEOPLES POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE CONFERENCE, BUT THE GATHERING LAST WEEK OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S POWERFUL CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THAT MEETING WAS CONDUCTED WITHOUT PRIOR ANNOUNCEMENT AND IN TOTAL SECRECY.

THE FIRST PEOPLES CONGRESS MET IN NINETEEN FIFTY-FOUR, AND SUBSEQUENT SESSIONS WERE HELD IN NINETEEN FIFTY-NINE, SIXTY-FOUR, AND SEVENTY-FIVE. THIS SESSION IS BEING ATTENDED BY MORE THAN THREE THOUSAND DEPUTIES, ALONG WITH THE ALMOST TWO THOUSAND MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL CONSULTATIVE GROUP, WHO ARE OBSERVERS. THERE IS NO INDICATION OF HOW LONG THE CONGRESS WILL GO ON. BUT MEETINGS IN THE PAST HAVE VARIED BETWEEN FOUR DAYS AND TWO WEEKS.

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